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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000582

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. HILL
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/02/2018
TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC PHUM ZI
SUBJECT: HARARE: WELSHMAN NCUBE ON SADC NEGOTIATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) Welshman Ncube briefed PolEcon chief July 2 on SADC negotiations, Tendai Biti, and the state of violence in Zimbabwe.

SADC Negotiations

¶2. (C) PolEcon Chief met with Ncube immediately after a meeting he had had with South African negotiators Mufamadi and Gumbi. According to Ncube, Zimbabwean president Mugabe and ZANU-PF negotiator Patrick Chinamasa told Mbeki at the African Union summit in Sharm El Sheikh that they would return MDC secretary-general Tendai Biti's passport so that he could travel to South Africa as early as July 3 for SADC-sponsored negotiations. Ncube said negotiators would be Nicholas Goche and Chinamasa representing ZANU-PF, Biti and Elton Mangoma representing the MDC Tsvangirai faction (MDC-T), and Ncube and Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga for the MDC Mutambara (MDC-M) faction.

¶3. (C) Ncube said that before the June 27 election, then negotiators Goche, Chinamasa, Biti, and Mangoma had agreed to a negotiating framework which contained four options for discussion:

--The 1980 model with a ceremonial president and executive prime minister. The MDC favored this option with Morgan Tsvangirai as prime minister;
--Mugabe continuing as president with Tsvangirai as vice president. This was favored by ZANU-PF;
--The Kenyan model with an executive president and executive prime minister;
--A transitional authority to take effect before the June 27 election.

¶4. (C) Negotiations ended with the arrest of Biti on June 12. Nevertheless, Tsvangirai subsequently spoke to Mbeki and agreed to the 1980 model. Mbeki presented Tsvangirai's position to Mugabe, according to Ncube, but Mugabe avoided

further contact with the South Africans before the June 27 election and did not respond. According to Ncube, the South Africans were not advocating the 1980 model or any other formulation, but rather acting as messengers.

¶5. (C) Ncube said that he, Biti, and Goche had met on June 30 to discuss further negotiations. They agreed that, since the election had taken place, negotiations would begin from "square zero," although Ncube said it was likely the four options described in paragraph 3 would be on the table.

¶6. (C) Ncube said Mbeki would conduct the negotiations. He said there was no interest at this time on the part of the AU, SADC, or individual African leaders in becoming involved in the process. (NOTE: In a diplomatic and press briefing today (Septel), Tsvangirai said the MDC would not proceed with negotiations absent an AU mediator to complement Mbeki. END NOTE.)

¶7. (C) Ncube expressed pessimism about a successful outcome to the negotiations. Tsvangirai was willing to accept Mugabe as a ceremonial president, but wanted the real power for himself; Mugabe's initial negotiating position was for ZANU-PF to maintain power with a junior role for the MDC -- and perhaps no role for Tsvangirai. Ncube thought one possible compromise could be the Kenyan model with Mugabe and Tsvangirai sharing power. This would require compromises, however, which neither of the two had demonstrated a willingness to make.

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A Note on Biti

¶8. (C) Ncube said Biti had emerged from jail bitter and angry, particularly toward Chinamasa. He thought that Mugabe had blamed the results of the March 29 elections on Chinamasa and Goche because their negotiations with the MDC had opened up the electoral process. Ncube opined that Chinamasa, stung by Mugabe, had decided to make an example of Biti by allowing him to be arrested and collaborating in his interrogation. On the other hand, said Ncube, Goche had tried to help Biti.

Trajectory of Violence

¶9. (C) According to Ncube, violence had subsided since the June 27 election. The process of dismantling many of the ZANU-PF "reeducation" camps was continuing.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) ZANU-PF stole the election in order to, inter alia, be able to negotiate with the MDC from a position of strength. The MDC does, however, have leverage. It can simply refuse to participate in a government with ZANU-PF, and leave it to ZANU-PF to deal with Zimbabwe's myriad problems. This might eventually force ZANU-PF to deal realistically with the opposition. ZANU-PF knows, despite its apparent state of denial, that at the end of the day it needs MDC support and western engagement to fix the economy.

¶11. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: Violence does seem to have subsided, particularly since the pre-election peak. We have received some reports that police in urban areas are rounding up the ZANU-PF renegade youth responsible for attacks on the opposition. Nevertheless, we also continue to receive reports of assaults and deaths from around the country. We will continue to track and assess the situation. END COMMENT.

McGee